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Sixth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1561 (2004) of 17 September 2004, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 19 September 2005 and requested me to continue to report periodically on progress in the implementation of the mandate of UNMIL. The present report covers developments since my report of 17 December 2004 (S/2004/972).

II. Major political developments

2. During the reporting period, some progress was made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Preparations for the October 2005 elections remained on course, as the National Elections Commission announced the electoral timetable. Electoral activity continued to intensify as political parties and aspiring presidential candidates discussed potential alliances. The former armed factions turned over a new leaf, with some forming new political parties and others associating themselves with existing parties. Increased numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees returned to their homes in the counties. The training programme for the new Liberian police service made steady progress. The process of restoring county administration continued, albeit at a slow pace. Limited progress was made in efforts to entrench the rule of law and improve the human rights situation in the country and the National Transitional Government of Liberia continued to function, notwithstanding serious internal tensions.

3. Despite the gains, the peace process still faces many challenges. There continues to be concern about the performance of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, particularly its lack of transparency in the collection and use of revenues and the resistance of some government and public corporation officials to reforms and audits aimed at fighting corruption.

4. As a result of pressure from donors, the Government has taken some encouraging steps to address the pressing problems of corruption and the lack of transparency and accountability by establishing a Task Force on Corruption and a Cash Management Committee. The Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Charles Gyude Bryant, also directed all government agencies, with the exception of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs, to vacate

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the Freeport in Monrovia in order to eliminate the payment of "tips and fees" to the agents of several ministries so as to stabilize the prices of basic commodities. In addition, on 11 January 2005, the National Transitional Legislative Assembly set up a Committee to investigate allegations of administrative and financial impropriety involving its leadership. The Committee, which presented its report on 8 March, concluded that there had been administrative and financial malpractices and recommended, inter alia, that appropriate remedial measures be taken. This led to a proposal by some members of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly that its leadership be suspended for a period of up to seven months. However, the ensuing discussions on this proposal degenerated into a fracas, as a result of which UNMIL peacekeepers had to intervene in order to restore calm.

5. During the reporting period, attempts were made by some senior government officials to circumvent provisions in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Minister of Labour, Laveli Supuwood, and the Minister of Presidential Affairs, Jackson Doe, declared their intention to run for the presidency and a senatorial seat, respectively, in the forthcoming elections, in contravention of article 25 (4), which bars principal Cabinet ministers within the National Transitional Government of Liberia from standing for elective office in the October elections. The Minister of Labour argued that this provision was inconsistent with article 21 (6), which states that there should be no restriction on members of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) to form political parties. Both UNMIL and the International Contact Group on Liberia have said that there is no contradiction between the two articles. The National Elections Commission and the Mediator of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), General Abdulsalami Abubakar, subsequently reaffirmed this position.

6. The large number of political parties and presidential candidates aspiring to contest the October elections has been a source of concern for some Liberians. There are currently 18 registered political parties and 43 presidential candidates. A further 20 political associations have expressed their intention to register as parties.

III. Monitoring the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

7. Two mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, namely the Implementation Monitoring Committee and the International Contact Group on Liberia have continued to meet regularly.

8. Subregional engagement with the peace process in Liberia continues to be strong. Upon the invitation of ECOWAS, my Special Representative, Jacques Paul Klein, attended the ministerial-level meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, as well as the ECOWAS Heads of State meeting, held in Accra on 18 and 19 January, respectively. From 28 February to 6 March, the ECOWAS Mediator visited Liberia to assess progress made in the peace process and preparations for the 11 October elections. On 3 March, he was joined by three ECOWAS Foreign Ministers from Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, as well as representatives of the Foreign Ministers of Senegal and Guinea, who were on a four-day visit to Liberia to assess the status of the implementation of the Comprehensive

Peace Agreement. In April, ECOWAS will host the second meeting of the National Transitional Government of Liberia-United Nations-ECOWAS Coordination Mechanism in Abuja. The meeting is expected to address the many challenges which lie ahead in the peace process, including the lack of adequate funding for the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, the performance of the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the process leading up to the October elections.

IV. Deployment of the Mission

9. As at 1 March, UNMIL troop strength stood at 14,854 of an authorized strength of 15,000 (see annex). During the reporting period, infantry companies from the Ethiopian contingent were deployed to Toe Town in Grand Gedeh County and Fish Town in Maryland County. Forward operating bases will be established in Gbarpolu County, Foya in Lofa County and Barclayville in Grand Kru County by late March. A Nigerian Signals Company arrived in Monrovia in late February and has since deployed a platoon to each Sector headquarters (Tubmanburg, Gbarnga and Zwedru), with its headquarters based at the UNMIL Force headquarters.

10. UNMIL troops continue to provide security at border crossing points and to conduct air, mobile and foot border patrols. They are also engaged in cordon and search operations and the collection and destruction of weapons. UNMIL military engineers are involved in the construction of infrastructure, including road maintenance to facilitate the movement of UNMIL troops, humanitarian assistance and the extension of State administration.

11. As of 1 March, of an authorized ceiling of 1,115, UNMIL civilian police strength stood at 1,059, including 569 civilian police officers, 10 correctional officers and 480 officers in four formed police units. Policing activities in the interior of the country continue to expand with UNMIL civilian police officers assigned to 22 outlying areas (Buchanan, Gbarnga, Kakata, Tubmanburg, Zwedru, Sanniquellie, Bo, Robertsport, Rivercess, Totota, Careysburg, Voinjama, Greenville, Salala, Ganta, Harper, Tapeta, Harbel, Yekepa, Saclepea, Loguatuo, Zorzor), as well as to Roberts International Airport, Spriggs Payne Airport and the Freeport of Monrovia. UNMIL civilian police have not deployed to River Gee, Grand Kru and Gbarpolu counties because of the absence of UNMIL military in those areas.

12. In addition to the current authorized civilian police strength, a temporary deployment of a fifth formed police unit, consisting of 120 personnel, will be required throughout the election period to enhance the Mission's response capability to emerging security challenges. This additional unit will be expected to be mobile and flexible, allowing for a swift response to problems in outlying areas, without diminishing the civil disturbance control capabilities of the other four formed police units located in the densely-populated areas of Monrovia, Buchanan and Gbarnga. The need for a well-equipped specialist unit, which can use non-lethal tactics to control crowds, cannot be satisfied by the newly restructured Liberian National Police, who will be relatively inexperienced and ill-equipped by the time of the elections, or by UNMIL troops who are not the best suited for such operations. In the circumstances, I would recommend that the Security Council authorize an additional 120 civilian police personnel for a period of six months, commencing in August.

13. With regard to civilian personnel, of an authorized total of 635, UNMIL now has 483 international staff, 30 per cent of whom are women. The Mission also has 385 United Nations Volunteers, representing 77 nationalities. The Mission's civil affairs and judicial officers are deployed in all counties except Grand Kru, while its human rights officers are permanently deployed in eight counties. Correctional mentors are based at Monrovia Central Prison and travel weekly to locations in the interior of the country.

V. Security situation

14. The overall security situation in Liberia remained calm but fragile during the reporting period. There were several incidents of lawlessness and violent unrest, but no major disturbances that threatened the peace process.

15. In December 2004, the security situation in Monrovia was marred by large demonstrations of students from the Monrovia Consolidated School System protesting the closure of schools. They blocked roads and attacked vehicles belonging to government officials and members of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly. Protests were also conducted by civil servants against the non-payment of salary arrears dating back to the Charles Taylor Administration.

16. Ex-combatants awaiting rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities also became increasingly volatile, holding protests during January and February 2005 in Monrovia, Buchanan and Gbarnga. On 26 January, ex-combatants blocked roads in the Gbarnga area with burning tyres and furniture and on 8 February, 50 former combatants armed with stones blocked the gates to the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Monrovia.

17. Ex-combatants have also caused disturbances at rubber plantations. On 14 February, former MODEL combatants engaged in acts of violence at the Sinoe rubber plantation during an ownership dispute. The plantation was subsequently closed pending the finalization of a new ownership agreement. In Bomi County, ex-combatants from the former LURD continued to occupy the Guthrie plantation illegally, warning that they were prepared to use violence to maintain control.

18. In Pleebo and Harper, Maryland County, there were alarming incidents of mob violence from 16 to 23 January, resulting from allegations that the disappearance of certain individuals was due to ritual killings. In Harper, these incidents resulted in the destruction of police and United Nations property, as well as injury to members of the local population. The National Transitional Government of Liberia responded by instituting a dusk-to-dawn curfew and UNMIL troops and formed police units acted quickly to restore calm. The curfew was eventually lifted on 7 February.

19. As more refugees and internally displaced persons return to their original homes, property disputes continue to pose security challenges. At the same time, reconciliation efforts have continued in order to minimize tensions between ethnic groups, including the Mandingo, Mano and Gio peoples, as well as the Mande Mel tribal groups.

20. New security concerns and challenges are arising as the October elections approach. Potential catalysts for instability include the escalating price of essential food items, particularly rice, which is the staple food, salary arrears claimed by civil servants, labour disputes and growing frustration among ex-combatants who have

not had access to reintegration opportunities. It is also likely that disaffection will rise among unemployed youth, students and government workers, who are dissatisfied with the Government's failure to deliver basic services.

21. A special desk exercise involving all UNMIL security components has been carried out in order to establish standard operating procedures to address security problems during the electoral process. Specific standard operating procedures have been developed for airport and seaport security and are being developed for security at the Freeport in Monrovia.

VI. The disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme

22. As at 1 March, the total number of formally disarmed combatants was 101,495, including 22,370 women, 8,523 boys and 2,440 girls. Ninety-eight per cent of the former child combatants have rejoined their families with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

23. The final figures of collected weapons and ammunition are 28,314 weapons, 33,604 pieces of heavy munitions and 6,486,136 rounds of small arms ammunition. UNMIL has destroyed all weapons and ammunition collected during the disarmament process and has received and destroyed an additional 252 assorted weapons and 3,513 pieces of ammunition since the formal closure of the disarmament and demobilization exercise in November 2004. The Mission continues to encourage communities to provide information on arms caches.

24. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by UNMIL, is launching a community arms collection and destruction project in Liberia. Discussions are proceeding on the establishment of both a National Commission on Small Arms and an arms collection pilot project targeting Bong and Lofa counties.

25. As indicated in my last report (S/2004/972), 612 ex-combatants identified themselves as foreign nationals during the disarmament and demobilization process. These former combatants are still awaiting repatriation. In January 2005, a delegation comprising the National Transitional Government of Liberia and UNMIL visited Sierra Leone in an effort to complete the arrangements for the reciprocal repatriation of Liberian and Sierra Leonean combatants. While a memorandum of understanding is yet to be signed, an agreement has been reached to repatriate, by 31 March, 435 former Liberian combatants who are in internment camps in Sierra Leone. So far, 50 children have been repatriated from Sierra Leone with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

26. The most pressing challenge is to create long-term reintegration opportunities for more than 100,000 ex-combatants. Only 25,591 ex-combatants are currently participating in reintegration projects funded by the UNDP Trust Fund, the European Commission and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Ongoing reintegration projects consist of public works and infrastructure development (6,891 ex-combatants), vocational training (4,214 ex-combatants), agricultural projects (1,496 ex-combatants), formal education (11,000 ex-combatants) and apprenticeship schemes (1,990 ex-combatants). A number of projects in the pipeline would provide immediate opportunities for 44,502 ex-combatants. However, many of these projects have yet to commence owing to a

lack of funding. The importance of ensuring that ex-combatants are provided with sustainable reintegration opportunities to assist them in becoming productive members of their communities cannot be overemphasized. In that regard, I appeal to the international community to contribute generously towards reducing the current funding shortfall of $40 million, which is urgently needed to provide reintegration projects for ex-combatants.

VII. Support for security sector reform

27. Steady progress was made in restructuring the Liberian National Police during the reporting period. Currently, some 1,134 students are enrolled in the police academy training programme, including 74 female trainees. The trainees consist of new recruits, as well as serving personnel from the Liberian National Police and the Special Security Service. Once commissioned into the field training programme, which follows the academic phase, the trainees are assigned to locations in Monrovia and outlying areas where they gain practical experience in areas such as traffic control, patrolling, community policing, 911 emergency call response, arrest and custody and report writing. The first class of trainees is scheduled to graduate on 1 April.

28. Plans to deploy national police officers to the interior of the country are nearing completion. As at 1 March, 200 of 233 police officers had been deployed to the 12 counties, which lack or have a minimal police presence. Command structures have also been put in place with the deployment of Liberian National Police commanders to five regional Liberian National Police centres in Kakata, Tubmanburg, Gbarnga, Zwedru and Harper.

29. In order for outlying deployments to be sustainable, the support of the National Transitional Government of Liberia and donors remains vital. Most police stations are in a state of disrepair owing to the long period of neglect. An estimated $871,000 is urgently required for basic equipment and the refurbishment of police stations, including detention cells and security measures.

30. Bilateral contributions from the Government of the United States of America have provided invaluable support to the police academy training programme, enabling the renovation of facilities, construction of classrooms and trainee accommodation, as well as the purchase of police uniforms and basic equipment. The Government of China has also provided 50 motorcycles, while Belgium has provided several small calibre weapons and ammunition for training purposes.

31. The National Transitional Government of Liberia, however, has been slow to implement police reforms in compliance with its 29 September 2004 memorandum of understanding with UNMIL. While there is a commitment to adopt the salary package approved by the Rule of Law Implementation Committee, the Government has not yet confirmed that budgeted funds will be made available. Additionally, it will need to allocate funding for pension and severance packages for the decommissioning of serving members of the Special Security Service.

32. The Government of the United States of America continues to take the lead in coordinating plans for the restructuring of the Liberian military and has contracted a United States-based private company, DynCorp, to assist the National Transitional Government of Liberia in the restructuring exercise. DynCorp has completed a

preliminary budget for the training and equipping of the new Liberian military, in which it is estimated that from $87.5 million to $200 million will be required, depending on the size of the new army. The refurbishment of the Ministry of Defence, the brigade headquarters and battalion barracks in four locations in the country, including Camp Scheiffelin, near Monrovia, is scheduled to commence in the first half of 2005.

33. Unfortunately, the restructuring exercise cannot proceed until the existing personnel from the Armed Forces of Liberia have been decommissioned. In that regard, the National Transitional Government of Liberia has submitted a list of 14,084 Armed Forces of Liberia personnel. UNMIL has cross-checked that list against its database of disarmed and demobilized combatants and identified 8,200 names that are in both the list and the database. UNMIL civilian police are also checking the list against registered police officers and new recruits and the Mission has also requested that the matching names and photos be checked against identification photos at the Ministry of Defence. Following completion of these checks, UNMIL will request that personnel who have received allowances under the disarmament and demobilization programme or joined the police training programme, be declared ineligible to receive terminal benefits from the Ministry of Defence.

34. It has been estimated that a minimum of $8.5 million in donor assistance will be required to cover the cost of the severance and pension packages for these armed forces personnel. I encourage the international community to provide the funds for this very important task.

VIII. Rule of law

35. Reform of the justice sector continues at a slow pace. Currently, circuit courts function in only eight counties (Bomi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Margibi, Montserrado and Nimba). Judges have been appointed in only 11 of 21 circuit courts, with the remaining vacancies expected to be filled before the start of the May court term. Of the 138 magistrate courts in the country, about 60 per cent are operational. Court houses in the counties are either located in dilapidated buildings or are non-existent.

36. As part of its rule of law capacity-building initiative, UNMIL has conducted four training courses throughout the country for prosecutors and law enforcement officers. Training courses for circuit court judges, magistrates and justices of the peace will commence as soon as their appointments have been finalized.

37. UNMIL has sustained its monitoring and advisory activities in the justice sector and is helping to implement reforms to strengthen the capacity of the courts and the prosecution. It is also facilitating the opening of county courts in advance of the forthcoming elections and in line with efforts of the National Transitional Government of Liberia to restore civil authority and administration to all parts of Liberia.

38. At the initiative of UNMIL, a Case Flow Management Committee has been established to address the problem of pre-trial detainees held for excessive periods. The Mission is also pursuing legislative reform initiatives related to rape, media law, human trafficking, bail, juries, narcotics and security agencies.

39. UNMIL has continued to work closely with national legal and judicial institutions, United Nations agencies, international partners and civil society to address the challenges facing the Liberian justice system. In particular, the lack of material resources and qualified personnel continue to hamper reform efforts. I appeal to donors to provide the funds required to expedite the reform of the legal and justice sectors.

40. During the reporting period, correctional institutions were operational in Monrovia, Kakata, Bondiway, Sanniquellie, Gbarnga and Buchanan. A short-term plan identifies Monrovia Central, Kakata, Gbarnga, Buchanan and Harper prisons as priority facilities for refurbishment and immediate development. The facility in Buchanan was opened by the Ministry of Justice on 3 January without basic security equipment and adequate staff, which led to a number of escapes on the very same day. The Government is also not able to provide prisoners with meals consistently, so the World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners are providing prisoners in Monrovia with two meals daily.

41. The recruitment of correctional officers has commenced, with recruitment exercises expected to take place every three months. UNMIL is providing technical advice and on-the-job training to corrections personnel. It is also assisting in developing draft national policies on prisoner discipline, adjudication procedures and admission procedures. Approximately $130,000 is urgently required for the training of correctional officers, while $800,000 is needed for prison refurbishment and security upgrades. Donors may wish to give urgent consideration to providing funding for this important area.

IX. Human rights and protection of civilians

42. UNMIL continued its monitoring and protection activities throughout the country. It also conducted human rights training for national police and military officers, as well as for civil society leaders and internally displaced persons. In addition, it focused on the human rights concerns of internally displaced persons, detainees and child victims of sexual assault.

43. During the reporting period, UNMIL human rights monitors noticed some disturbing trends in the justice system. Firstly, children and juveniles are rarely tried according to the Juvenile Justice Procedure Code, while poor case-management and inaccurate dates frequently lead to children being tried as adults. Secondly, reports of rape and sexual assault against young children are not always being investigated or prosecuted in accordance with the law. In that regard, owing to the lack of available State services, UNMIL supports such investigations by facilitating medical examinations and psychosocial counselling and by locating safe houses for the victims.

44. The draft Act to establish the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, which was provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, was finally passed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly on 1 March. The National Human Rights Action Plan, which is the blueprint for implementation of Liberia's obligations under international human rights treaties, is currently being developed. On 9 February, Chairman Bryant endorsed the draft legislation for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was also provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The bill now awaits enactment into law. UNMIL

is conducting public awareness activities and lobbying to facilitate the passage of the legislation in the near future.

X. Restoration and consolidation of State authority

45. During the period under review, limited progress was made in the restoration of State authority and in the rehabilitation of government institutions throughout the country. As at 18 February, the National Task Force for the Restoration of State authority had completed consultations for the selection of Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent nominees in all 15 counties. Six nominees were recently confirmed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly and will soon take up their posts in Bomi, Margibi, Nimba, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado and Gbarpolu. During his visit to the south-eastern region, from 22 February to 3 March, Chairman Bryant also nominated Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents for Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe and Maryland counties. These nominees are currently awaiting confirmation by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly.

46. In addition, the National Transitional Government of Liberia has deployed 564 government officials across the country, including 112 internal revenue collectors, to 10 revenue-collecting posts, 202 customs officers to 11 rural customs posts and approximately 250 Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization officers. UNMIL continues to facilitate confidence-building meetings between the various security and revenue generation agencies at border crossing-points. It is also working with government authorities to streamline the security presence of agencies at border points in order to reduce extortion and harassment.

47. UNMIL is supporting the Government's efforts to ensure financial transparency and accountability by liaising with the General Audit Office on audits of ministries and State-owned enterprises. Thus far, the General Audit Office has submitted to Chairman Bryant the audit reports of the foreign travel account and the Liberian National Police. UNMIL also continues to support the efforts of the Governance Reform Commission to transform the General Audit Office into a fully autonomous institution with its own budget.

48. Concerns persist about the limited capacity of the National Transitional Government of Liberia to deliver basic services. A dearth of official vehicles and office accommodation, combined with other logistical constraints, undermines the ability of recently deployed County Superintendents to perform their duties. Progress is also hampered by the fact that most regional officials must travel to Monrovia to receive their salaries. UNMIL has been working with the Central Bank of Liberia on a project to develop rural branches of the Central Bank and have together identified Voinjama, Tubmanburg and Zwedru as prospective sites. At the same time, UNMIL and the World Bank are working with the Government to find a short-term solution to this problem.

49. The National Transitional Government of Liberia should ensure that adequate resources are earmarked for this critical component of post-conflict recovery. In that regard, I would also encourage the international community to contribute generously to the Government's efforts to restore basic services throughout the country.

XI. Restoring proper management of natural resources

50. UNMIL continues to support the efforts of the National Transitional Government of Liberia in asserting control over the country's land-based and marine natural resources. The Government still lacks the capacity to police illegal fishing activities in its territorial waters and is powerless to prevent the offshore dumping of waste by foreign vessels. In this respect, UNMIL provides advice to the technical working group on fishing and undertakes reconnaissance of Liberian waters to monitor illegal fishing. UNMIL also assists government institutions in their efforts to regulate issues of ownership, land tenure, management and functioning in respect of rubber and timber plantations.

51. The Government is currently focused on ensuring that the diamond sector complies with the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme. It has prohibited the issuance of diamond-mining licences and has trained 120 personnel in the Kimberley Process. In December 2004, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy began surveillance of diamond-mining areas and discovered evidence of illegal diamond mining in Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. In the circumstances, the announcement by USAID to provide $500,000 worth of equipment and training to the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy to support its work is quite welcome. In order to assess progress made in meeting the standards required by the Kimberley Process, a review team comprised of international experts on the Process visited Liberia from 15 to 18 February. It will present its recommendations to the Panel of Experts dealing with sanctions on Liberia so that these may be brought to the attention of the Security Council.

52. With respect to timber, the Forestry Development Authority has recently taken the lead in establishing a joint working group to develop an action plan for finding a solution to reports that significant numbers of ex-combatants are living in Sapo National Park. In the meantime, UNMIL has been providing training to guards from the Authority.

53. UNMIL is also conducting an Environmental Baseline Survey for Liberia to assess the environmental needs of residents outside Monrovia. The survey will be used to support the Government's efforts to administer natural resources by identifying implementation partners and county-specific environmental concerns.

XII. Elections

54. On 17 December 2004, Chairman Bryant signed the Electoral Reform Bill into law. Since the bill's passage, the National Elections Commission has continued to develop the legal and policy framework for elections through the adoption of guidelines on the registration of political parties and independent candidates, as well as on coalitions and alliances. The National Elections Commission, with assistance from UNMIL and other advisers, has also formulated regulations on the voter registration process, a code of conduct for the Commission's staff and guidelines for the accreditation of domestic and international observers. In addition, it has launched a process by which the political parties will draft their own code of conduct. Other elements of the legal framework to be completed include regulations on campaign financing and a code of conduct for the media.

55. On 31 January, the National Elections Commission began the civic education campaign and on 7 February, it announced the timetable for the electoral process. Voter registration will be conducted from 25 April to 21 May and the voters' registers will be exhibited from 27 June through 1 July. The elections will take place on 11 October and the election results will be announced by 26 October.

56. The National Elections Commission, in collaboration with UNMIL, the International Federation for Electoral Systems, UNDP and the European Community, is currently focusing on preparing for the voter registration exercise. Several key tasks must be accomplished before voter registration can commence, including: the creation of a data centre; the establishment of a warehouse; the deployment of county field staff; the recruitment and training of voter registration staff; and the procurement and receipt of registration materials. An operational plan for voter registration has been approved by the National Elections Commission. In addition to establishing an accurate voter roll, the voter registration data will facilitate decisions concerning the number and location of polling places for election day and how electoral materials will be distributed, as well as assist in defining the 64 electoral districts for the House of Representatives.

United Nations support for the elections

57. The United Nations family in Liberia is committed to ensuring that the electoral process proceeds as smoothly as possible, given the difficult conditions prevailing in the country. The UNMIL electoral staff is expected to be deployed to 11 counties by mid-March and a schedule is being finalized for the establishment of electoral offices in 17 major locations by 21 March.

58. The National Elections Commission is working closely with UNMIL to develop election messages that will target various segments of the population, including women, youth and ex-combatants. UNMIL will provide support to the civic and voter education campaigns via its radio, video and community outreach programmes. Media development training for the upcoming elections has also been provided to managers of community radio stations and, in cooperation with the Press Union of Liberia, to journalists.

59. A series of planning and coordination meetings on security are being conducted to establish a synchronized timeline of activities to ensure that security is maintained throughout the office construction, personnel deployment and operational phases. UNMIL troops will play a major role in support of the elections process, including by providing security for the establishment of county electoral offices and identification of voter registration locations. They will also provide escort and logistical support as electoral officials are deployed and material is moved throughout the country. Joint election operations centres will be established at UNMIL Force headquarters and in the sectors to ensure a cohesive command and control structure that will better coordinate support efforts. Plans are being developed to ensure that troop rotations do not disrupt elections-related operations.

60. UNMIL civilian police will provide support to the Liberian National Police through mentoring, monitoring and providing technical advice on elections security arrangements. During the electoral period, the Liberian National Police will have full responsibility for the immediate security around registration and polling stations, with UNMIL civilian police ensuring timely and adequate reporting and

follow-up on investigations of elections-related security incidents and monitoring the performance of local law enforcement agencies.

61. The UNMIL Gender Unit, in cooperation with relevant partners and stakeholders, is working to ensure fair and genuine representation of women in the electoral process. It will provide training for political parties on electoral regulations from a gender perspective in March and will run a workshop for female candidates in June, in cooperation with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute and civil society.

62. In December 2004, UNDP funded a Liberian observer mission to the Ghanaian elections. This gave the National Elections Commission an opportunity to consider first-hand the operational and technical issues involved in the planning of the October elections. UNDP is also providing technical expertise in financial planning and budget development to the National Elections Commission and is administering the European Community's $3.4 million electoral contribution.

63. UNDP has drafted a memorandum of understanding with the National Democratic Institute to formalize its collaboration in supporting civil society groups to carry out a civic and voter education programme. Ten civil society groups have been identified and are currently being assessed, while the mapping of the areas of responsibility for each group has been completed.

XIII. The humanitarian situation

64. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of Liberian refugees from Ghana, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. An estimated 100,000 refugees have returned spontaneously, while 8,113 have returned with assistance from UNHCR. UNHCR has also joined efforts with the International Organization for Migration, WFP and UNMIL to facilitate the voluntary transfer of internally displaced persons from camps in and around Monrovia to their areas of return throughout Liberia. As of 1 March, 67,644 internally displaced persons had returned to their counties of origin and had been provided with return packages. Increasing numbers of people are choosing to return spontaneously. UNMIL has made its trucks available on an as-needed basis to WFP and UNHCR to facilitate pre-positioning of food and non-food items in areas of return.

65. The returning population is also being assisted through broader reintegration programmes undertaken within the context of the Results-Focused Transitional Framework. A key element in the UNHCR return strategy is to ensure linkages between the repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction processes. In support of this effort, on 7 February, UNDP, in collaboration with the World Bank, organized the launch of the post-conflict Rapid Social Assessment, which provides a framework for community driven development. In partnership with UNHCR, UNDP has identified 91 microprojects in the areas of water and sanitation, education and health and has set up mechanisms for community-based recovery programmes.

66. WFP continued to provide food assistance for over 250,000 internally displaced persons and returnees residing in camps and transit centres throughout

Liberia. It is assisting families in eight counties through its emergency school feeding programme, which reaches more than 360,000 school children. WFP also distributes 9,881 metric tons of food each month to an average of 582,934 beneficiaries.

67. During the period under review, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) commenced agricultural support in the south-eastern region (Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Sinoe Counties) by providing seeds, farming tools and training for 6,500 farm families, including returnees and host community residents. Similar support is being provided to 4,500 farm families in Lofa, Bong and Nimba Counties. In conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO has launched a training programme in the craft of blacksmithing, which targets 120 ex-combatants and returnees. FAO is also providing fishing equipment and training to 1,500 fishermen in Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado and Grand Bassa Counties.

68. The World Health Organization (WHO) has supported the re-establishment of seven county health teams by providing them with furniture, typewriters, stationery and communications equipment. This has allowed the resumption of an integrated disease surveillance system in most parts of the country. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, WHO conducted an investigation into the recent surge in cases of Lassa fever (which also affected the UNMIL peacekeeping contingents) and supplied drugs for treatment. UNICEF also restarted health services in 27 health centres and facilitated access to basic health care for 100,000 internally displaced persons. In addition, it supplied vaccination materials to various sites across the country, enabling the immunization of 970,000 children under five years of age against polio, 1,500,000 children between six months and 15 years of age against measles and 230,000 people against yellow fever.

69. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization supported a five-day workshop that brought together experts in technical and vocational education and training in order to develop a common national curriculum for this field, as well as a six-day course in "planning for quality education in Liberia". UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, has trained 13,000 teachers in "emergency" education as part of its back-to-school campaign and 500 teachers in the accelerated learning programme methodology, which is being implemented in 95 schools. Thirty-three of these schools were recently renovated or provided with furniture, facilitating the enrolment of 10,500 children in the accelerated learning programme. Additionally, 433 water points and 1,096 latrines were constructed in 450 schools by UNICEF.

XIV. HIV/AIDS

70. The UNMIL HIV/AIDS Unit continues to conduct awareness, sensitization and personal risk assessment sessions for the Mission's personnel. It provides a similar programme to local communities in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, as well as with community-based and religious organizations. A "training-of-trainers" programme is also ongoing for peer education in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support for both peacekeepers and the local community. The Unit offers HIV voluntary counselling and test services and provides post-exposure prophylaxis kits for all UNMIL personnel.

XV. Gender

71. The UNMIL Gender Unit is continuing to ensure gender mainstreaming in all spheres of UNMIL activities. It conducts awareness training in gender, gender mainstreaming and sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse for civilians, civilian police and military personnel. It also coordinates mechanisms to address the prevention of, and response to, sexual and gender-based violence in Liberia through sensitization and capacity-building exercises. The Unit is currently developing a concept paper to guide the activities of the Women and Children's Protection Unit within the Liberian National Police.

72. With respect to refugees and internally displaced persons, the Gender Unit has worked to ensure the availability of sex-aggregated data on refugees and displaced persons for future planning purposes, as well as for civic and voter education activities. The Unit also focuses on the smooth reintegration and inclusion into relief, recovery and reconstruction programmes of women associated with fighting forces. In supporting national recovery efforts, it undertakes initiatives to develop opportunities for rural women in the areas of agriculture and business. It also assisted in drafting a national girls' education policy and in training female teachers to address gender disparities in education.

XVI. Sexual exploitation and abuse

73. Following the publication, in October 2003, of the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13), UNMIL has taken a number of initiatives to emphasize that it is a violation of United Nations regulations to exchange money, food or other goods for sex or sexual favours. So far, the Mission has issued 14 administrative instructions to military, civilian and police components, emphasizing the need for UNMIL personnel to abide by United Nations codes of conduct. Moreover, UNMIL conducts Mission-wide training and sensitization and has instituted mechanisms to receive reports of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which would enable immediate investigation and prompt action to be taken against those found liable. These mechanisms include the establishment of a focal point for sexual exploitation and abuse and a hotline accessible to the public for reporting cases of sexual exploitation and abuse.

74. From 28 February to 2 March, the Deputy Secretary-General visited Liberia to convey my deep concern and zero tolerance policy on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse and to obtain the Mission's feedback on the mechanisms in place to deal with any such allegations. Following this visit, UNMIL was tasked with establishing a Personnel Conduct Unit, appointing an alternate focal point on sexual exploitation and abuse, improving the confidentiality of its hotline, establishing an interdisciplinary task force with focal points from all components in the Mission and forwarding a plan of action to address sexual exploitation and abuse to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. UNMIL is working closely with that Department to carry out these tasks.

XVII. Public information

75. The UNMIL public information component continues to disseminate information on operational developments to international and local media outlets and to the Liberian populace. Public education campaigns are focused on sensitizing the public about elections, returns of internally displaced persons and sexual exploitation and abuse. On 11 and 12 February, UNMIL-sponsored "peace concerts", featuring West African performers, were held in football stadiums in Monrovia and Gbarnga, attracting near-capacity audiences of 35,000 and 10,000 persons, respectively.

XVIII. National recovery

76. The Results-Focused Transition Framework continues to serve as the common platform for directing and monitoring Liberia's transition to recovery. The framework is led by the National Transitional Government of Liberia, with support from the United Nations country team, donors and non-governmental organizations. The implementation of national recovery programmes for the remainder of 2005 will require redoubled efforts to target critical priorities and sectors. Given the improved security situation and access throughout the country, comprehensive assessments have been completed in nearly every sector, which should help to align planning with realities on the ground and should generate opportunities for targeted interventions.

77. The Framework Implementation and Monitoring Committee's Support Office, which was established to help coordinate and report on the progress of framework implementation, attained mixed success in 2004 owing to inadequate recruitment and staffing. However, the recent strengthening of the Office should enable it to become a strong mechanism in support of Liberia's transition. The scheduled revision process began in late January, with stakeholder consultations led by the Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs. The revised Framework will reflect the full spectrum of Liberia's needs, priorities and strategies for 2005.

78. In order to prioritize the most urgent humanitarian needs in Liberia and to link humanitarian responses to longer-term recovery plans, an integrated Results-Focused Transition Framework Humanitarian Appeal was launched in December 2004, calling for $246 million. A donor conference is also being planned for April in Monrovia, during which there will be a full review of the revised framework by the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the international community.

XIX. Mission support

79. UNMIL has continued to expand its operations throughout the country. The major support challenges include rebuilding critical infrastructure to enable UNMIL and its humanitarian partners to reach inaccessible areas, and accessing construction materials for engineering efforts.

80. The focus of the Mission's logistical efforts over the next 18 months will be to consolidate force sustainment and provide support for the elections. A joint civilian/military concept of support plan has been developed, which identifies

priority tasks as: the establishment of a forward logistics base at Gbarnga; the upgrading and maintenance of the designated main supply routes; and the provision of hard-wall accommodation for troops. The development of a prioritized engineering plan that links engineering priorities and capabilities is well advanced.

XX. Regional aspects

81. UNMIL has continued to collaborate with the other peacekeeping and political missions in West Africa, including the United Nations Office for West Africa, to harmonize activities so as to address cross-border problems. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) hold cross-border liaison meetings with UNMIL at least once a month. UNMIL Force headquarters is currently coordinating the work of the Inter-mission Working Group and continues to provide limited logistical assistance by sea to UNOCI. The three missions are continuing to devise ways to work closely together as outlined in my report on inter-mission cooperation and possible cross-border operations between UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI (S/2005/135).

82. On 20 February, the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, the President of Sierra Leone and the Prime Minister of Guinea, representing President Conté, held a summit in Koindu, Sierra Leone, during which they pledged to strengthen regional cooperation and mutual understanding, so as to create an enabling environment for sustainable peace and stability in the Mano River basin countries. To that end, they committed themselves to securing the porous borders of the three countries by deploying joint patrols in order to stem the flow of small arms and light weapons, as well as to curb illegal cross-border activities that deny their countries revenue, which could be used to develop border areas.

83. The Force Commanders from UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI met at the Office for West Africa, United Nations in Dakar, from 22 to 24 February. The UNAMSIL Joint Mission Analysis Cell provided an update on the regional threat assessment, while its UNMIL counterpart provided a threat assessment for Liberia. Various operational scenarios were discussed and options were considered for responses at the Mission and subregional levels. The Heads of Mission from UNAMSIL, UNMIL and UNOCI also met on 11 March in Sierra Leone to discuss issues related to inter-mission cooperation.

XXI. Observations

84. During the reporting period, progress in implementing the key elements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement continued to be made. In particular, the main pillars of the transition process have been successfully erected, including the establishment and functioning of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, the conduct of disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration, and the beginning of large-scale returns of refugees and internally displaced persons. A measure of security stability has also been created and electoral preparations have commenced. However, these pillars are still fragile, leading to concern about the Government's ability to consolidate the emerging stability in the transition period. If not provided with the necessary support and advice during this critical period,

Liberia faces the risk of repeating the pattern of abuse of power, institutional breakdown and violence that has plagued the country for the past 25 years.

85. It is therefore imperative that the National Transitional Government of Liberia proceed without delay to institute fundamental reforms and that the international community urgently provide the required resources to allow for the consolidation of the gains made so far. It would be tragic if this expensive investment were allowed to be undermined simply because of failure to provide the relatively modest resources required. One key area that will require immediate attention is the funding of the rehabilitation and reintegration programme for ex-combatants. Donors should expedite the redemption of outstanding pledges and contribute the $40 million urgently required to complete this programme.

86. At the same time, there is a critical need for the National Transitional Government of Liberia to put an end to corrupt practices and to institute transparent arrangements for the management of public funds. It will also need to ensure that appropriate disciplinary actions are instituted against government officials who obstruct audits and resist institutional reforms aimed at fighting corruption.

87. However, because the Government may not be able to implement the foregoing measures effectively, many Liberians, as well as the leaders of ECOWAS, are calling for strict international oversight of the key revenue-generating ministries and public corporations, such as the Ministries of Finance and Lands, Mines and Energy, as well as the Forestry Development Authority, the National Ports Authority and the Central Bank. In this regard, the Security Council may wish to endorse strongly the appeal made in paragraph 7 of article XXVI of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which was addressed to the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union, as well as other international organizations and institutions, to make available trained personnel and international experts to provide technical support and assistance to key ministries and public corporations. These measures should help to establish much-needed oversight, particularly in areas involving revenue generation.

88. While substantial progress has been made, with the assistance of UNMIL and other international partners, in the training, reforming and restructuring of the Liberian National Police, there continues to be concern that inadequate salaries and logistics may perpetuate a culture of corruption in the police service. The National Transitional Government of Liberia needs to play a more pro-active role in urgently providing an appropriate solution to this issue.

89. In addition, based on the reasons outlined in paragraph 12 of the present report, I would strongly recommend the deployment of an additional formed police unit, for an interim period of six months commencing in August, to reinforce UNMIL capacity to maintain a secure environment during the electoral period.

90. It is cause for concern that the programme for restructuring the Armed Forces of Liberia has fallen behind schedule owing, inter alia, to the lack of funds for severance packages and pensions for the existing military personnel. I would therefore appeal to the Government and the international community to give due consideration to providing the $8.5 million required for this purpose.

91. Some sectors of Liberian society, particularly those in the diaspora, have proposed the convening of a national consultative forum prior to the October elections to discuss reforms, including those related to land use and property rights,

which would ensure that the new Government conducts the affairs of State in a democratic manner and utilizes the country's resources for the benefit of the nation. While all Liberians appear to agree on the need for such a forum, opinions are divided concerning its timing. Some believe that it could lead to a stalemate on delicate issues and result in the postponement of the elections. I would urge Liberians to intensify consultations on this important issue with a view to achieving a consensus. Should they agree on the timing and the agenda of the proposed forum, the United Nations would be ready to assist in facilitating this initiative.

92. In the meantime, measures need to be taken to pave the way for successful, free and fair elections to be held in October. In this regard, government authority should be fully restored throughout the country, courts should be operational in all counties, the Liberian National Police should be capable of enforcing law and order and county administrators should have the capacity to deliver essential services to the people.

93. The National Transitional Government of Liberia and its international partners should also take action to address a number of potential threats to Liberia's fragile stability. These include growing disaffection among former combatants, unemployed youth, students and government workers, who are displeased by the Government's inability to deliver basic services; property disputes over the illegal occupation of plantations by ex-combatants, returnees and other groupings; and the worrisome ethnic and religious undercurrents. In addition, there are still concerns about the activities of various close associates of former President Charles Taylor, who remains in exile in Nigeria. UNMIL continues to receive reports that some of his former military commanders and business associates, as well as members of his political party, maintain regular contact with him and are planning to undermine the peace process. This issue will require the attention of West African leaders and the Security Council.

94. The developments in Côte d'Ivoire and their possible impact on efforts to stabilize Liberia are also a source of concern. Some of the former Liberian factions reportedly still maintain close links with both the Forces nouvelles and the pro-Government forces in Côte d'Ivoire. With the rehabilitation and reintegration programme in Liberia facing difficulties, there is a grave risk of undesirable cross-border movement of combatants and weapons between the two countries. It is therefore essential that UNMIL and UNOCI continue to enhance their collaboration in monitoring these border areas.

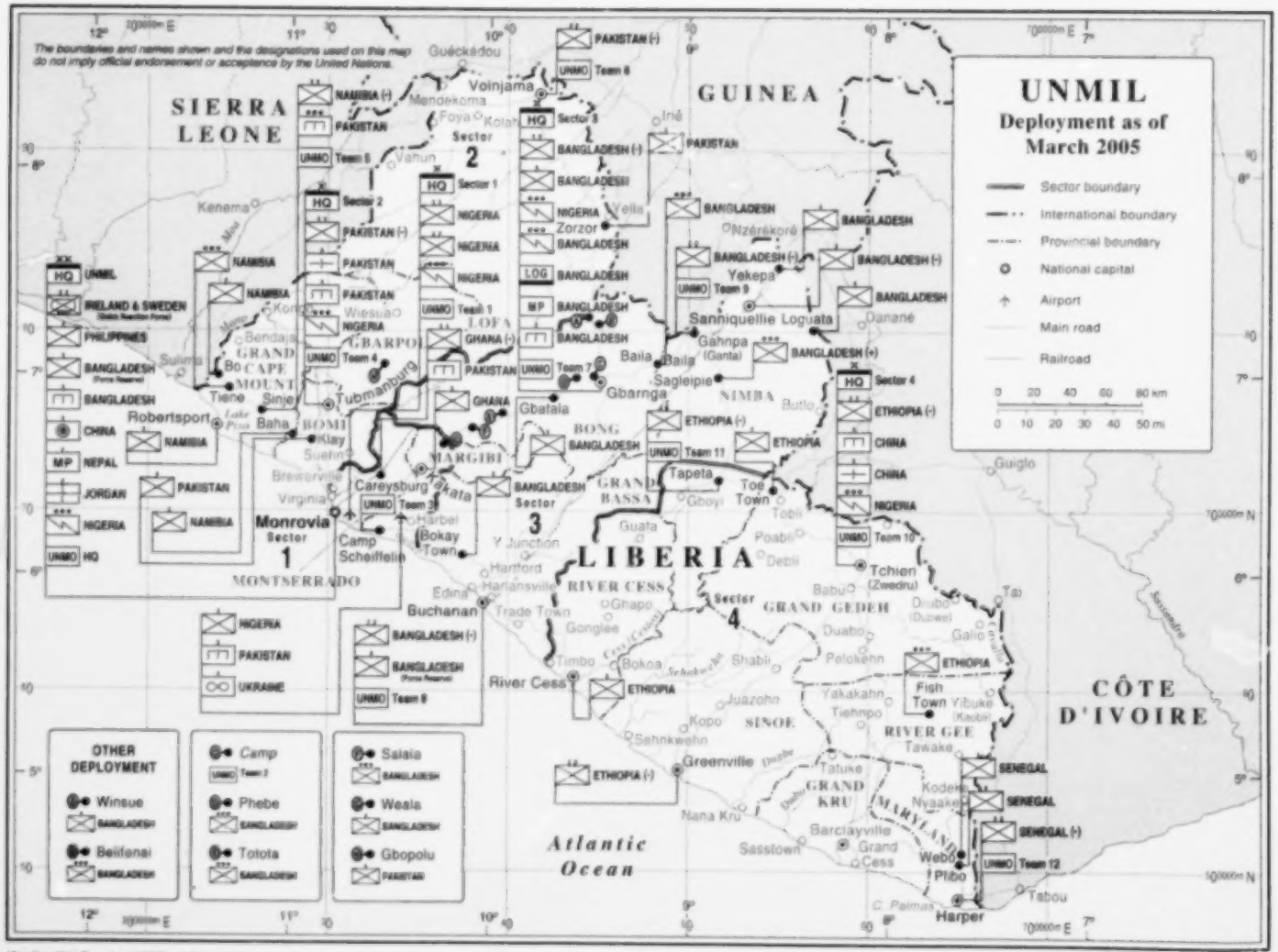
95. In conclusion, I would like to commend my Special Representative, Jacques Paul Klein and all civilian and military staff of UNMIL for their contributions to the peace process under difficult and challenging circumstances. I would also like to express my gratitude to the countries that are contributing troops and police personnel to the Mission, as well as to ECOWAS leaders, the African Union, members of the International Contact Group on Liberia, United Nations organizations, other humanitarian organizations and the numerous bilateral donors, for their steadfast efforts to return peace to Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and civilian police strength (as at 1 March 2005)

	Military component				
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police component*
Argentina					2
Bangladesh	18	11	3 270	3 299	24
Benin	3	0		3	
Bolivia	3	1		4	
Bosnia and Herzegovina				0	15
Brazil		1		1	
Bulgaria	2			2	
China	5	10	558	573	24
Croatia		3		3	
Czech Republic	3			3	
Denmark	2			2	
Ecuador	3	1		4	
Egypt	8			8	
El Salvador	3			3	
Ethiopia	17	9	2 536	2 562	
Fiji				0	30
Finland		2		2	
France		1		1	
Gambia	5			5	30
Germany					5
Ghana	11	5	849	865	36
Indonesia	3			3	
Ireland		6	426	432	
Jamaica				0	10
Jordan	7	9	115	131	140
Kenya	3	4		7	15
Kyrgyzstan	4			4	3
Malawi		2		2	23
Malaysia	10			10	
Mali	5	2		7	
Namibia	1	5	857	863	6
Nepal	3	2	40	45	256
Niger	2			2	4
Nigeria	22	20	1 948	1 990	152
Norway				0	6
Pakistan	16	7	2 727	2 750	25
Paraguay	3	1		4	
Peru	3	2		5	
Philippines	3	4	163	170	29
Poland	2			2	
Portugal				0	2

Country	Military component				Civilian police component
	Military observers	Staff officers	Troops	Total	
Republic of Korea	1	1		2	
Republic of Moldova	3	1		4	
Romania	3			3	
Russian Federation	6			6	18
Samoa				0	18
Senegal	3	4	600	607	10
Serbia and Montenegro	7			7	8
South Africa		3		3	
Sri Lanka				0	11
Sweden		3	134	137	4
Togo		1		1	
Turkey				0	34
Uganda				0	20
Ukraine	3	1	297	301	11
United Kingdom		3		3	
United States of America	7	3		10	20
Uruguay				0	2
Yemen				0	4
Zambia	3			3	29
Zimbabwe				0	33
Total	**206**	**128**	**14 520**	**14 854**	**1 059**



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